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Conditions Of My Release

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CONDITIONS OF MY RELEASE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of
Master of Fine Art

in

The School of Art and Design

by
Michael A. Alford
BFA, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 1999
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I would like to thank and dedicate this endeavor to my wife, best friend and muse Belinda Flores-Shinshillas. At the most trying time of your life, while battling invasive Breast Cancer, you urged me to forge on. Your strength, determination and perseverance demonstrate the power of the human spirit. Your love and support are unimaginable.

To my children: May this accomplishment demonstrate the importance of an education despite any obstacles in your life.

I send my thanks and kindest regards to the esteemed members of my Graduate Committee (Mark Zucker PhD, Derick Ostrenko, Rod Parker, Paul Dean and Richard Doubleday). Your expertise and encouragement are greatly appreciated.

To the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation Department: Thank you for your assistance in the opportunity of being the Disabled Veteran to seek and obtain a Graduate Degree in Fine Art. I hope my work paves the path for more Veterans in the future seeking Fine Art Graduate Degrees.

To the brave and selfless men and women serving (or whom have served) this great country: Thank you for your service and dedication to freedom and Democracy.

*Special Dedication: To Mark Zucker, PhD, Art Historian, Scholar, Gentleman and friend. Throughout this process, Mark Zucker was my greatest academic example, advocate, professor, consummate jokester and friend. He touched many lives through his passion for Art.

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ABSTRACT

From the dawn of human history, technology has driven and shaped our evolution as a species. It has vastly accelerated our ability to communicate, create, conquer and do more with less time, space and energy. Throughout the history of Art, technology has forged new methods, movements and Masters. “*Conditions Of My Release*” is a series of mixed media works that utilizes a variety of common and cutting edge technologies as a way to explore the relevance of “*Time & Space*” as an influential medium in artistic production. Have they been masked or obscured by the technology used to create them or the final product? The embrace of technology plays a delicate role in the desire to analyze *Time & Space* as a medium for artistic expression.

It is my belief that these questions can be explored and demonstrated by using various forms of *technology* in the content and context of Conceptual Art. *Time & Space* will serve as the essential mediums used to create the artwork. *Technology* will also be the primary means and tool for demonstration and documentation. A wide variety of natural phenomena will serve as the source of inspiration. The represented artwork will challenge the viewer to consider the validity of *Time & Space* as a medium while simultaneously questioning them to find the relationship of this underlying idea in the series. I want that those who take their time to explore the space to be able to come up with new answers to the questions I am posing.

INTRODUCTION

“Conditions Of My Release” is an exhibit of selected works that demonstrates and explores the idea of *Time & Space* as a medium in the practice of Conceptual and technology based arts practice. Each work consists of a series or installation that challenges the viewer and invites them to make their own exploration and draw their own conclusions. While each work is vastly different from the last, each has a specific relationship to the next.

The primary tool used to produce or demonstrate each work involves the use of technology as a means of transforming *Time & Space*. In some instances, that technology will be clear and apparent while at other times, the viewer will be challenged to find it and make the connection to the work. Every work produced for this exhibit required examined the use of *Time & Space* as a way to create and document. Each artwork from this exhibit will feature a simple *artwork statement* that serves as a map to guide the viewer into and through the work. In particular, these statements include an account of the process and history of the piece.

The work in *“Conditions Of My Release”* relies on the viewer to move past the physicality of the objects presented. I want to utilize various renditions of *Time & Space* to provide a lattice for understanding the work in relation to the context of its creation. As an artist, I continually challenge and ask myself what is Art and what can be used to create it. The work serves as visual and mental stimuli to highlight the viewer's relationship to time and space in conjunction with the exhibit.

A BRIEF HISTORY (OF CONCEPTUAL ART)

The emergence of *Conceptual Art* is a major turning point in the history of Art. The origins of Conceptual Art can be traced and emerged from *Dada* (1912-23), *Avant-Garde* (1920's-1940's) and *Fluxus* (1950's-present) movements. Conceptual Art as we know it today, grabbed and began to shake up the Contemporary Art scene in the 1960's. *Conceptual Art* by Peter Osborne further demonstrates the movements direct impact and influence of Art spawning other movements and genres including Pop Art, Minimalism, Performance Art, Land Art, Installation Art, Relational Art through the burgeoning wild west mentality of Digital Art.¹

While wrought with a great deal of misunderstanding and contention, there's one culprit largely associated for firing the first (or at least the loudest) shot at the Art World. *Marcel Duchamp* began exhibiting "ready-made" Art in 1913. As well known Conceptual Artist Joseph Kosuth points out, this change from "appearance" to "conception" was "*the beginning of Modern Art and the beginning of Conceptual Art.*"² Questioning the form, function and language of Art are the underlying principle and actions of Conceptual Art. There is a special emphasis on recording or documenting content, context and process. This idea is key to the success of the work and far outweighs the importance of "product." Today, there are three generally "accepted" forms of Conceptual Art: *Post, Neo- and New Genre Conceptual Art.*³

¹ *Conceptual Art*, Peter Osborne, Phaidon Press, 2011.

² *Conceptual Art*, Daniel Marzona, Taschen, 2006.

³ *Art After Conceptual Art*, Alberro & Buchmann, MIT Press, 2006.

An essential and long time practice of conceptual artists have been to utilize current technologies in the pursuit of their practice. As technology has advanced, large and cumbersome equipment once used to photograph, videotape, reproduce or record process have been replaced. Today, technology offers a wide variety of smaller, faster and more accessible devices for artists. *New Genre Conceptual Artists* embrace and thrive with digital devices including digital cameras, digital video, computers, inkjet/laser printers, GPS, HD video screens and social media. These technologies allow a form of creation, experience and distribution where the medium is *virtual* and exists closer to the moment, mind and body.

THE CATALYST OF TECHNOLOGY

The renowned artist Hans Haacke declared, “*the difference between Nature and Technology is technology is man-made.*”⁴ The technology of Nature is driven by evolution over time through varying adaptations while the technology of man evolves by the supply and demand of end use consumers. Modern society has the ability to instantly traverse *Time & Space* with the simple click of a mouse. A multitude of choices are readily available. In many ways, technology challenges the act traveling to remote locations. As new technologies emerge, is it less likely that people venture out? While the idea of Art has encouraged exploration and embraced “*nomadic notions*”, new generations of artists are exploring and exploiting these ideas through technology. Nomadic ventures can be traced in Art History through artists such as Gaughan, Van Gogh, Duchamp and Hamish Fulton.⁵

Modern artists have the ability to create, explore, store and challenge the notion of Art from the result of technological advances. The result yields greater capabilities to reach a broader audience in less amount of time while simultaneously maximizing space. In the past, an artist could require vast amounts of time and space in their creative pursuits. “*Smart*” and “*mobile*” devices allows an artist instant access to the world and accessibility for creating anywhere and anytime. Theoretically, warehouses full of artwork can be created and stored on an external hard drive beyond the confines of the traditional studio.

⁴ *Art After Conceptual Art*, Alberro & Buchmann, MIT Press, 2006.

⁵ *But Is It Art?*, Cynthia A. Freeland, Oxford Press, 2001.

In creating the artwork for “*Conditions Of My Release*”, I rely on and utilize varying forms of modern technologies. In some cases, the technology is used in a completely new manner. Certain technologies are merely used to document a particular process, progress or event. An example of using an advanced technology other than its intended use and transforming it into an instrument of Art is the *T.I.E.S.* (Time, Interactive, Experience, Stories) *Project*. This work consists of using a cutting edge scientific tool as an instrument of art. A DNA test can yield more information about an individual than in most cases, they know about themselves.

Individual identity and who we are is largely based on information gained from our parents, relatives, experience and environment. Oral family history can sometimes become blurred, forgotten or manipulated over time and generations. Our genetic makeup (comprised of 23 chromosome pairs) however, can't be changed and is very concise. A DNA test can verify certain genetic markers that can trace our genetic origins, prove or disprove maternity or paternity, track genetic populations or even prove guilt or innocence in a court of law. Advanced studies can even verify the presence of genetic diseases and confirm Neanderthal genes still present in modern humans. It is even possible to trace genetic links to famous historical figures such as Genghis Khan or Benjamin Franklin.

This series would test and confirm (or deny) what I have come to know about my family history and myself. My grandmother was Austrian by birth, moved to Germany and eventually migrated to America prior to the outbreak of WW II. She later married an Irish/Acadian in Louisiana and my father was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

My mother was described as a French “gypsy”/Choctaw Indian mix. Several volunteers (including myself) were DNA tested using a cheek swab kit. Several volunteers were recruited (including myself) and DNA tested using a simple and painless cheek swab kit. Participants were asked general questions about their family background and origins. The DNA collections were performed in a controlled environment and the process was documented photographically. These kits were then mailed back to the testing laboratory and we awaited the results.

In my case, the results were quite surprising. While the Austrian and Irish markers were confirmed, there was a major genetic marker that proved quite surprising. The strongest genetic marker (attributed as maternal) was of Romanian decent. Upon further investigation, the answer was revealed. The “gypsy” title my mother carried was in fact Romanian. Romanian gypsies were known to travel and migrate to France. It was my mother’s mother that migrated to and married an Acadian/Choctaw Indian. This work is a very personal and unique invitation for people to see the truest essence of me as a person, artist and human being.

To quantify the results of this test, I performed a second and more advanced DNA test. This test probed genetic diseases, historic genetic links, and physiological and psychological traits. The testing company further ran the DNA information through the world’s largest DNA data bank. This result would directly result in me finding and talking to my sister Robin Livingston for the first time in 40 years. This genetically confirmed story was made possible through the use of state of the art technology for the purpose of art.

ARTWORK=TIME & SPACE

The word *artwork* can be a tricky and contentious word to define. People can often tell you what it isn't but have difficulty telling you what it is. Through my life and growth as an artist, I have come to believe that regardless of what Art is or isn't, it always requires *Time & Space*. In one context, it refers to a finished work of art while simultaneously means the practice or process of creating Art. However the term is used, both have a common ground often overlooked, forgotten or lost in translation. The creative process involves a great deal of *Time & Space*. Time in the creative process refers to an artist's concept, intention and application or use of materials. Space can be defined as the area or substrate that an artwork occupies or utilizes in the intended environment. From this I derive my idea that *Time & Space* is (past, present and future)⁶ the most widely used medium and the core meaning of Art.

Consider Walter DeMaria's expansive work *Lightning Field* (1977). This work is often described as one of the greatest works of Art in the 20th Century. This extraordinary work (located in Southwestern New Mexico) is comprised of 400 forged and polished stainless steel rods. These rods are known to attract lightning strikes and discharge massive bursts of electricity as they glow from the intense heat. The rods are spaced 220 feet apart in a grid that measures one kilometer long by one mile wide. The artist has often cited that the work was intended to be seen, experienced analyzed and critiqued over extended periods of time and varying distances.⁷

⁶ *Concerning The Spiritual In Art*, Wassily Kandinsky, Translated by M.T.H. Sadler, Dover Publications, 1977.

⁷ *Lightning Field*, Kenneth Baker, DIA Foundation Press, 2008.

My work in the same regard is a constant exploration and utilization of *Time & Space* as an artistic medium. A wide variety of technologies are deployed for the purpose of documenting or representing the process. At times, the work can require a great deal of energy (both physical and mental) and a considerable amount of *Time & Space* to complete the artwork. It is not uncommon for people to ask questions concerning my work such as “why” or “isn’t there an easier way?”

In Joseph Beuys book *What Is Art?* He describes Art as “*a path towards something.*”⁸ I would suggest re-examining the word *Artwork*. For me, the work is the path that leads to Art. An examination of such a path can be found in my series *Borders, Fences & Other Imaginary Places* (enamel on 8 cradled 16” x 20” panels). This work required me to drive 3480 miles round trip to the U.S./Mexico border (Santa Theresa Port of Entry). A multitude of modern technologies aided in the creative process. Consider the use of my vehicle, computer, smartphone, credit card and GPS. Each of the panels had words masked off in vinyl letters (4 in English and 4 in Spanish). The four panels with the Spanish text were carried and placed behind the U.S. side of the border fence. The four English panels were placed against the border fence facing Mexico. To complete the work uninterrupted along the border, a marginal fee was paid called a “*mordita.*” This payment is never regarded as a bribe but more as a convenience or security fee. All of the panels were spray painted with black, white and gray enamel paint then quickly transported back to a safe location to removed the masked off vinyl lettering.

⁸ *What Is Art?*, Joseph Beuys, Claireview Books, 2004.

This artwork has by all definitions, transformed the border fence dividing two countries and three states into an instrument of Art. It could also serve as one of the greatest “*Duchampian*” declarations. Two distinct messages are represented in this work. One explores and eludes to the American idea of wide-open spaces and freedom (DON’T FENCE ME IN) while the other explores notions of migrating and seeking a better life for your family (DON’T FENCE ME OUT). The completed series has a haunting x-ray effect of the border fence. The four English text panels will be hung above the Spanish text panels. The physical separation of the work represents the demarcation between the border and the border experience. It further serves as a metaphor for other geopolitical, national/international, economic or philosophical differences.

As a result of the escalating tension and border violence, I was not permitted to photograph the location or process. Photography is strictly forbidden for fear of reprisals that can result in death of an individual in the photograph or their family. I did however, record the GPS data of the site. I am interested in experimenting with different ways of communicating the effort that goes into the production of work like mine. Will the audience appreciate what was necessary to create this work?

CONCLUSION

“Conditions Of My Release” is a series of works in a variety of media that brings together common and cutting-edge technologies. Artwork from this exhibit will explore *Time & Space* as an artist’s medium. The varying processes and documentation form a symbiotic relationship with the outcome or final product in my practice. My artwork will present and examine new opportunities afforded to artists through the injection of state of the art technologies and heavily informed by *New Genre Conceptual Art*. Particular events or phenomena in Nature (environmental and human) will be observed, documented and serve as a source, reference or inspiration.

This series will be comprised of several installations that engage the viewer. Each work will feature a brief artwork statement providing means, method, process and outcome to lead the viewer. The pieces hold their meaning and existence as self-evident. It is the viewer’s responsibility to connect the dots and follow the clues left by the artist to make their own discovery. I want to address the evolving range of tools available to artists as methods for crafting new experiences and exploring new meanings.

CHRONOLOGY OF EXHIBITED DOCUMENTATION
AND ARTWORK STATEMENTS



Conditions Of My
RELEASE

MICHAEL ALFORD

Demonstrating Time and Space as an Art Form

“Even In Death We Are All Still The Same” is a profoundly personal and visceral work of Art. The viewer is immediately presented 9 illuminated and gleaming vessels containing the cremated remains of 9 individuals (ages 19-90). Each represents a different aspect and relationship to the *time and space* of the human experience

This unique work is intended to effectively question and simultaneously negate any forms of discrimination or bias based on age, race, gender, economics, personal or religious beliefs.

The act of human cremation has long been an important symbolic, religious, mythical and personal practice throughout recorded history. Today, the practice of cremation is a high-tech process governed by computer controls, interfaces and software for optimal efficiency.

*(The Artist wishes to Thank Mr. Bono Pulido and the Esperanza Funeral Home for recognizing the creative importance of this work and supporting this unique project)

T .I.E.S.

(Time, Interactive, Experience, Stories)

Acting as an intermediary between Art and Science, the T.I.E.S Project utilizes one of the most advanced forms of technology as a medium of Art. This complex series delves into the ideas of identity, society, origins, communication and time.

How much do you really know about yourself, your family history and the validity of that information. Over time and generations, information can be lost, misinterpreted, or altered for convenience or necessity.

A simple and painless DNA test can confirm or deny this information. In many cases, it can tell you even more. Depending on the complexity of the DNA test, it can reveal genetic diseases, inherited traits and even provide genetic links to people throughout history. What impact if any will this newly acquired information have on its participants and their idea of who they are?



WHEN ART WORKS

Most people generally say they a normal and happy childhood. On average, an adult can typically recall memories from around the age of 5 years old. My childhood (with a few exceptions) memories begin around 8 years old. When I was 7, my parents abruptly divorced and I would never see my mother or sisters ever again. Time would pass and the boy would grow into a man. Through the years, questions still lingered in my mind.

For me, Art has always been an exploration and examination of possibilities. These ideas are the foundation of my practice and teaching philosophy. A recent project involving using DNA testing as an instrument of Art would profoundly change my life. Several volunteers (including myself) were DNA tested to examine the ideas of identity, history and communication. I performed a second more advanced DNA survey on myself to quantify the results of the other tests. This new test would cross-reference my results in the world's largest DNA data bank. The cross referenced results would directly lead to me finding and talking to my sister Robin for the first time in 40 years. We have planned a family reunion on Thanksgiving Day (2013).

Picasso once stated "**Art Lies**" but I believe "**Art Is Truth.**"
It was the very possibilities of Art of that made this possible.

ACTION, REACTION, PROJECTILE, IMPACT

To a geologist, a stone is a literal time capsule. For me, stone has always held a significance to a specific place or time. I have collected stones from virtually every place important to me throughout my life. Extraordinary forces of nature can (much like humans) cause stones to migrate vast distances over geological time and space.

Comprised of an installation, *Action, Reaction, Projectile, Impact* explores the serenity of nature and the sudden and deliberate impact of man. The viewer is introduced to the basic ideas of actions followed by those actions creating reverberations throughout nature.

The documentation for this work required the artist to both simultaneously photograph his actions with one hand while throwing the stones with the other. This ambidextrous approach utilized both the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

Borders, Fences and Imaginary Places
(31° 40' 19" N 106° 20' 11" W, alt. 402 ft.)

Examining the issues and complexities of boundaries, exploration and possibilities, *Borders, Fences and Imaginary Places* also serves as a record for a daunting and dangerous journey for the creation of Art.

The physical act of using an 1800-mile metal border fence that divides two nations and three states as an instrument of art is possibly the ultimate “*Duchampian*” declaration. Do the artwork and its creation solely focus on border issues or can it simply be a metaphor for such issues as geopolitical, economical, national or cultural identities?

(The haunting X-ray qualities of this work were obtained by placing the “masked” panels behind the Border Fence and spray painting the fence. The English text faced Mexico and the Spanish text faced America.)

Microcosms

In simplest terms, a Microcosm is a world within a world. Intersecting my Scientific and Artistic curiosities, this work visualizes the concepts of process, systems, origins and primordial life.

Microcosms is comprised of eight images and eight sealed environments. Each image represents one stage of development over a period of thirty days. The installation was repeated eight times over eight months to observe and record its various stages of development.

Over the course of this exhibit, the audience has an eyewitness view to the work's eventual metamorphosis and evolution. One form of energy is converted to another fueling the rise of a new micro-climate and world.

MURDER BY NUMBERS

It's not everyday that one finds themselves an eyewitness to a murder. This is a unique event and set of circumstances that put me front row with a "birds eye view." The morning was like any other. Up at 6 AM and out into the morning mist to walk the dog. The sky was a hazy Technicolor blur from the morning light. All was quiet and still. A gentle breeze pushed at the pines. And then it happened. She was fighting off her attackers with great ferocity. At first there was one, then quickly the group swelled to five. My dog and I stood there stunned in amazement, shock and anger. The air was now torrid and filled with screams, screeches, feathers and flesh.

As so aptly named, a murder of crows was attempting to raid a mockingbird's nest of her young. The crows are far larger and seemed to enjoy the tormenting. They took turns striking at the mother then swarming the nest. Filled with a mother's instincts and rage, she fought on. Overwhelmed and exhausted, she eventually relented. With the nest destroyed and her young now consumed, she landed on the ground a few feet away. Her beak was open wide and she panted deeply to catch her breath.

The murder was far from over. There would be one last victim. The bloodied mockingbird was snatched from the ground and tossed about from crow to crow like children playing with a ball. The final crow rose high into the misty air and dropped her. The mockingbird tumbled awkwardly not as a bird should until her lifeless body crashed into the earth. As quickly as it started, it was over.

Nature follows a complex and sometimes seemingly cruel set of rules. Survival of the fittest governs the balance of life. This is a story about nature, cause and effect, a memorial and perhaps, much like a fairy tale. Now she lays entombed in glass forever sleeping but her story here recorded

Ode (To A Lost Sanctuary)

For more than a decade, a five acre heavily wooded tract of land served as a “Green Space.” This sanctuary contained numerous grand Live Oaks, Magnolias, Maples and old growth Pine trees.

Ode (To A Lost Sanctuary) serves as a memorial and multimedia documentation of the trees that occupied this space. Recently, the owner of the land passed away and the land was sold to the state for a satellite Mental Health Hospital. The original plan indicated that most of these majestic trees would be preserved but, once an adjacent piece of land (intended for a parking lot) couldn't be acquired, all of the trees were cut down.

The rough, irregular wood used to create this work (and others) was obtained, cut and repurposed. All images presented are of various trees from that location recorded, edited and posted to various social media sites with an iPhone 4s.

SET LIST (1977)

As a child, the future was described as a place of scientific wonder. Lasers, robots, flying cars, super computers and time travel. Today, many of those things are commonly overlooked aspects of daily life. Historic thinkers such as Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking have supported and staked their careers on the idea of time travel. From the perspective of an artist, I would suggest we have always been capable of time travel. The human mind and our limitless ability to imagine can send us back in time through memories, remain omni-present and advance far forward into the future. *SET LIST (1977)* is a transformational, technology driven artistic object that serves as a time machine. In 1977, I was 10 years old and absorbed with Art and Music. My 17-year-old cousin had concert tickets to what he claimed was “*the rock-n-roll band and concert of the century.*” He was supposed to take his girlfriend but they broke up the day before the show. He decided to take me and this would be my first rock-n-roll concert. This was no ordinary concert as it turned out to be the legendary rock band *Led Zeppelin*. Modern technology has allowed me to track down the exact “set list” of songs the band played that night. Lasers have enabled me to record and visualize those songs. I invite you to listen to the “SET LIST” and travel back in time to 1977 and imagine yourself as that 10-year-old boy experiencing that magical moment for the first time.

*(This work was inspired by a conversation about music with the acclaimed Art Historian and beloved Professor Mark J. Zucker, PhD who challenged me to create a Time Machine.)

BACK TO THE EARTH

I am often asked who or what is my source of inspiration. Most people seem puzzled when I don't state the name of a famous artist but define Nature as my greatest inspiration and resource. It is in nature that I find solace, contemplation and an abundance of readily available materials. *BACK TO THE EARTH* was created as a site-specific performance in a semi-private but public location. This was a physical and mental opportunity to engage in a practice that provides me a great deal of creative satisfaction. There are also a number of therapeutic properties involved as well. The progression of the work was documented photographically over a period of 6 hours. A specific area of earth was removed and carefully relocated creating a positive and negative form. The process then involved laying my body down in the excavation in an attempt to assume the shape and become closer to the earth.

Throughout this labor-intensive process, people would intentionally go out of their way to discover what I was doing. Common questions asked included: "are you digging for treasure", "what are you looking for", "why are you doing this" and "are you trying to hide a dead body?" On three separate occasions, three different law enforcement agencies showed up when it was "*anonymously*" reported that there was possible illegal dumping or burying of a body.

This work is intended to demonstrate the notions of cycles, transition and the instinctual inevitability of the mind and the body. Man often attempts to place himself above nature when in fact, we are part of nature.

SIMPLE LESSONS

“*SIMPLE LESSONS*” explores the idea of facing an unknown factor that disrupts your daily routines. Lessons in life are established by the repetitions of ideas or activities by demonstration, participation or observation.

Taking the time to sit down and enjoy a meal with loved ones is one lesson in life that yields great benefits. Sharing a meal has many cultural and religious symbolisms. What happens when that practice is interrupted by something unseen? Is it abandoned or is there a new lesson waiting to be discovered?

For more than a year and a half, my wife Belinda battled and I’m proud to say, beat *Invasive Aggressive Breast Cancer*. At this time, we both faced a great deal of the unknown and our daily routines were completely disrupted. We had to forge ahead and learn new lessons (through trial and error) to establish our new routines. During the Chemotherapy process, the chemicals effected her ability to eat or even enjoy food. It was during this time that we found she could still tolerate and enjoy fried rice.

Every time I got her fried rice, fortune cookies were included in the take out bag. In an attempt to keep her spirits up, I would read the fortunes to her and save them. Those collected “*fortunes*” were the basis and concept for this work. Perhaps there is a *SIMPLE LESSON* within this artist/audience collaboration for you.

SIMPLE LESSONS

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Randomly select one fortune cookie from the container.
2. Gently/carefully open the package to remove cookie (discarding wrapper in the small wastebasket).
3. Carefully break the cookie in half and remove the fortune.
4. Read the fortune & eat the cookie.
5. Smooth the message flat in your hand and fold in half (words facing forward).
6. Apply one double-sided adhesive tape to the middle of the back of the fortune (discarding dispensing tabs in wastebasket).
7. Take a moment and examine the imaginary grid (using observation).
8. Align your fortune in the imaginary grid and carefully apply.
9. Consider the possibility that the message inside the cookie (that you randomly selected) has any relevance or meaning to you or your life.
10. Enjoy reading the fortunes or watching others collaborate on this work.

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VITA

Michael Alford spent the first half of his life serving in the U.S. Armed Forces Special Operations. He is a decorated disabled Veteran who has served in direct combat operations in Panama, Iraq, Somalia as well as numerous humanitarian missions around the world. Michael earned his B.F.A. from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in 1999 while still active duty. He has nearly 20 years experience as an artist and educator. Michael Alford will be the first disabled veteran to seek and earn a Master of Fine Art degree from Louisiana State University. He plans to continue his education and pursue a PhD in Education. The artwork of Michael Alford can be found in several private and public collections.